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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the successive steps in the development of an adjective rating scale for measuring audience responses to short previews of coming films. Seven filtering steps were used to reduce an original list of 600 adjectives and adjectival phrases into a final rating scale with 101 words. From factor analyses of the responses of college students, the author concluded that there were six dimensions of meaning that are likely to occur in ratings of film previews: likeableness, impressiveness, fright, realism, quality of production, and obtrusiveness. (AA)

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An Adjective Rating Scale

For Film Previews

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Subjective responses to films in general and to "previews of coming attractions" in particular are difficult to define and measure. People coming out of a motion picture theatre are frequently able to tell an interviewer whether or not they liked the film they saw. But when questioned further on the reasons for their like or dislike, people are frequently embarassed or tongue tied. When they do express themselves it is frequently difficult to code their responses in a detailed, quantitative manner. The people themselves are rarely aware analytically of the reasons for their responses. In addition people's responses to films and film previews are affected by their own biases and subjective attitudes and are in general not "objective."

But, however unobjective people's opinions about films may be, these subjective responses may be of some value to the researcher, to the film maker, and to the film distributor. If a film maker or film distributor makes a film preview he or she considers to be funny and the typical film goer thinks it isn't, in such a case the film goer's subjective response to a film is very important. If a producer markets a film preview of a film he or she considers to be a serious hard-hitting social drama, while film goers consider the preview to be dumb, irrelevant, and lousy, the producer ought to be aware of this negative reaction. For the researcher interested in investigating whether there are basic dimensions of subjective responses to film previews that are consistant over a wide diversity of previews, a method of being able to codify and quantitatively analyze subjective responses to previews can be very important.

If we assume that audiences' subjective responses to previews are important, then the question arises what is the best way to obtain them? To measure audiences' responses to film previews, the author developed an adjective rating scale for film previews. This scale was developed by having people choose from an exhaustive list of adjective and adjectival phrases which words best fitted their subjective responses to a particular film trailer. Factor analysis of the subjects' choices and ranking of adjectives and adjectival phrases was used in order to determine the attributes or traits or basic elements of meaning subjects responded to in the film previews.

RELATED RESEARCH

Wells, Leavitt, and McConville (1970) used a similar approach in developing rating scales for Television Commercials. They found three main factors, overall level of energy or stimulation, personal relevance, and familiarity. Four other factors also emerged at a lower level of explanatory power: sensual, novel, authoritative, and disliked. Leavitt's Multidimensional Perceptual Scales (1970) was developed " . . .to find out what basic dimensions underlie the viewer's response. . .when a representative sample of attributes are scaled by self-administered rating scales."[1] Wells (1964) used a similar approach in scaling magazine advertisements. He found three factors: meaningfulness, liking and newness. The factor scores were used in a multiple-regression equation to predict an independent measure of memorability of the ads. In related studies Hevner (1935) studied response to music through adjective rating scales. Osgood, Suci, and Tannebaum (1957) developed an adjective rating scale which they termed the "Semantic Differential" to measure meaning. They applied this Semantic Differential scale to many different situations and found, using factor analysis,that three factors loaded particularly heavy: evaluation, potency

and activity. This present study uses attribute ratings and factor analysis as a method of multidimensional scaling as in the studies of Leavitt, Wells and McConville (1970), but departs from such similar studies as Osgood, Suci and Tannebaum (1957) by using unipolar scales instead of the Semantic Differential format.

METHOD

Film "previews of coming attractions" of one to four minutes in length were shown to subjects. Previews were chosen because they are designed primarily to attract people to go see a particular film. Previews are in a sense commercials for a feature film. For the film maker and especially for the film distributor, the preview can at times be even more important that the film itself because, among other factors such as good reviews, good word of mouth, newspaper and display advertisements, and radio ads, the attractiveness and drawing power of the preview is very important in getting people to go see the feature film it summarizes and selectively samples. The preview, because of its shorter length, was also more adaptable to testing situations than the longer feature film.

Subjects were chosen from students at two different universities in the Southwest. Tha author asked for volunteers in classes he was able to address, to view a short preview and then fill out a questionnaire. The subjects from the first university (Group A) were from a school strongly influenced by Christian beliefs. The subjects from the second university (Group B) were from a private college with loose sectarian ties.

In order to allow for the widest possible scope of viewers' responses to film previews, an extensive list of adjectives and adjectival phrases was developed. This list was made up of words and phrases taken from different sources such as Hevner (1935), Gough and Heilbrun (1965), Osgood and Suci (1952), various advertising studies, Wells, Leavitt and McConville

(1970), and words selected by the author (i.e., "cinematic", etc.). This list contained 600 adjectives and adjectival phrases which, in the author's opinion, were exhaustive of words that viewers might conceivably use in responding to film previews.

Seven filtering steps were then used to arrive at a smaller number of words.

1. The author had intended using new previews of films the subjects had not seen before. However, the author was unable to find a legal means of buying or renting new film previews, even though many different sources were investigated. Instead of obtaining new previews, the author attempted to use a broad historical sampling of previews.

Ten previews of coming attractions as different from each other as possible were selected using a random sampling technique from among 250 different previews. The 250 previews were first subdivided according to genre; i.e., Wewtern, Comedy, etc. Then random sampling was used to select one preview from each genre. The previews shown to the first group of respondents were as follows: 1) Super Fly (1 min.), 2) Star (1 min.), 3) Mackenna's Gold (1 min.), 4) War and Peace (1 min.), 5) Butterflies Are Free (1 min.), 6) Topaz (1 min.), 7) Buona Sera, Mrs. Campbell (1 min), 8) Hud (1 min), 9) Live and Let Die (1 min), 10) Earth vs. the Flying Saucers (3 min.).

In terms of content validity Dr. Peter Bukalski, Chairman, Department of Cinema and Photography, Southern Illinois University; Dr. Tom Olson, Director of the Public Visual Communications Program, Department of Radio-TV, Southern Illinois University; and Dr. John Mercer, Former Chairman, Dept. of Cinema and Photography, Southern Illinois University; and the author judged the selected previews to ae a good sampling of relatively modern and somewhat older, both good, fair and poor film previews. One of the above faculty remarked that

none of the selected preview represented the critical testimony type of preview, such as Judith Crist being quoted as saying "Marvelous" about a particular film. The author considered this type of preview as relating more to a display advertisement than to an actual sampling of scenes or "previews" from a particular film.

300 Undergraduate college students were divided into groups of thirty each. The Western preview was then shown to the first thirty Undergraduates, the Comedy preview was shown to the second thirty different students, etc., until all ten previews were screened, one different preview per thirty Undergraduates.

One third of the total list of 600 adjectives was given to each respondent who was asked to check those words that applied to the preview the respondent saw. Thus, of a group of thirty respondents seeing a particular preview, ten received the first one-third of the total list of 600 adjectives, ten different respondents received the second one-third of the total list of adjectives, ten different respondents received the third one-third of the total list of adjectives. Each adjective, then, had the possibility of being checked by one hundred different respondents over ten different film previews.

Words checked by 10% or more of the respondents were retained. 398 or 66% of the words were retained.

2. The frequently checked words of step #1 were presented to different college students (Group A) accompanied by a five point scale ranging from "does not describe the film at all" to "describes the film very well." Using this rating scale, ten students rated each of the above film previews on one-third of the words remaining after step #1 (i.e., ten subjects viewed preview #1 and rated the first one-third of the words, a different ten subjects viewed the same preview #1 and rated the second one-third of the words; ten additional subjects viewed the

same preview #1 and rated the third one-third of the words; ten different subjects viewed preview #2 and rated the first one-third of the words, etc.). Thus each ward was rated by 100 different subjects divided among ten film trailers. The results for each word were subjected to a one-way ANOVA using film previews as the independent variable with ten different levels or catagories. The .001 level was the cut off. 178 words survived the .001 level cut off.

3. In order to determine whether the surviving words or phrases of step #2 measured entirely independent ideas or whether they grouped together to suggest a much smaller number of basic concepts or themes, factor analysis using the correlations of the retained words of step #2 across subjects was carried out. The words that loaded at least .50 on any emerging factors were retained. Principal components analysis with unity in the diagonal, unrotated, with a stopping eigenvalue of one (Biomed program 08M unrotated) was used to perform the factor analysis. (Verimax rotation was attempted but served only to separate one group of subjects from another.)

4. After eliminating redundant words within factors, there were 93 words that loaded .50 or higher on some factor. In order to reduce this number of words to a more manageable size, these words were then refactored together. Again choosing high-loading words left 68 words as the end product of this four stage process.

5. In order to provide every chance for the emergence of a possible dimension that did not emerge in the first rating of film previews, ten new, different, and longer film previews were shown each to thirty different college students from a different University (Group B). The previews shown to Group B were as follows: 1) Poseidon Adventure (3 min.), 2) Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

(3 min.), 3) The Trial (3 min.), 4) What's New, Pussycat? (3 min.), 5) The Way We Were (3 min.), 6) The Naked and the Wicked (3 min.), 7) Premature Burial (3 min.), 8) Magnificent Seven (3 min.), 9) 20 Million Miles to Earth (3 min.), 10) Seven Brides for Seven Brothers (4 min.).

As in step #2 above, ten subjects rated each of the new film previews on one-third of the words remaining after step 1. Thus each word was again rated by 100 different subjects divided among ten film previews. The new previews differed from the first ones in that they were all three to four minutes long such as are shown in theatres, while the first previews were almost all one minute long such as are shown on TV. The results for each word were subjected to a one-way ANOVA using film previews as the independent variable with ten different levels or caragories. 264 words survived the .001 level cut off.

6. As in step #3, factor analysis was performed using the correlation of the retained words of step #5 across subjects. Because of computer capacity subjects rating the first one-third of the adjectives were factor analyzed with subjects rating the second one-third of the adjectives. The second one-third was then factor analyzed with the third one-third. Words loading .45 or higher in both analyses were retained and factored together. Again choosing high-loading words left 111 words at the end of this step.

7. In order to allow every possible chance for a new dimension to emerge that was not specified in steps #4 and #6, the 68 words which were the end product of the first ten preview films with subjects from one university (Group A, step #4) were then factor analyzed with the 111 words from the second ten preview films with subjects from a second university (Group B, step #6). Choosing high-loading words left 101 words at the end of this step.

RESULTS

Factor analysis of the first ten previews (group 1) provided five significant factors with words loading above .50. Table I shows the highest loading words on each factor. Factor I, II, and V had both positive and negative factor loadings. Words followed by an * loaded on the same factor in both Groups A and B.

GROUP A

FACTOR I				FACTOR II		
SCALE	LOADING	SCALE	LOADING	SCALE		SCALE
DISLIKED		LIKED		IMPRESSIVE		UNIMPRESSIVE
nauseating*	.69	cheerful*	- .63	mature	.64	
negative*	.66	delightful*	- .62	informative*	.64	
hostile*	.64	happy*	- .62	great*	.62	
insulting	.63	refreshing*	- .60	heavy	.61	silly - .61
hard-headed	.62	light-hearted*	- .59	intelligent	.59	
lousy*	.60			influential	.56	
frustrating	.60	bright*	- .59	powerful	.56	
				serious	.55	
irritating	.59	light*	- .58	impressive*	.54	
horrifying*	.59	joyful*	- .55	memorable*	.53	
grotesque*	.58	enjoyable*	- .53	melancholy	.53	
nasty	.56	joyous*	- .52	meaningful to me	53	
horrible*	.56	gay*	- .51			
gloomy	.55	merry*	- .50	interesting	.52	
icky*	.55	entertaining*	- .50	revolutionary	.52	
in poor taste	.54	(creative)*	- .44	intense	.51	
persistant	.51	(pleasant)*	- .43	good*	.51	
tough	.50	(romantic)*	- .40	frightening	.50	comical- .50
(uncooth)*	.46			masculine	.50	
(crummy)*	.41					

FACTOR V				FACTOR VI		
SCALE	LOADING	SCALE	LOADING	SCALE		SCALE
ABSURDITY		REALISM		OBTRUSIVE		
dumb	.52	relevant	- .50	rude*	.74	
ridiculous	.52	(realistic)*	- .44	sarcastic*	.58	
				degrading	.53	
				defiant	.52	
				cynical	.51	
				demanding	.51	
				vulgar	.50	
				contemporary	.50	

FACTOR VIII	
SCALE	LOADING
QUALITY OF PRODUCTION	
well-developed	.60
worth looking at	.56
well-done	.50

The Disliked-Liked Factor accounted for 12% of the total variance. Gayety seems an important aspect of the liked dimension.

The Impressive-Unimpressive Factor accounted for 12% of the total variance. Impressiveness or meaningfulness does not seem necessarily related to likeableness or enjoyableness.

The Absurdity-Realism Factor accounted for 4% of the total variance.

The Obtrusive Factor accounted for 4% of the total variance.

The Quality of Production Factor accounted for 4% of the total variance.

(Other factors loading below the .50 level were Fantasy and Sex)

Factor analysis of the second ten previews shown to different Ss (group B) provided five significant factors with words loading above .50. Table II shows the highest loading words on each factor. Factors I, II, III, and IV had both positive and negative factor loadings. Words followed by an * loaded on the same factor in both Group B and Group A.

GROUP B

FACTOR I

SCALE	LOADING	SCALE	LOADING
LIKED		DISLIKED	
warm	.71	waste of time	- .70
well-made	.69	bad	- .68
better than most	.68	unattractive	- .66
delightful*	.68	sloppy	- .65
well-done	.68	awful	- .64
joyful*	.63	sick	- .64
enchanting	.63	tasteless	- .63
light-hearted*	.62	uncooth*	- .62
happy*	.62	amateurish	- .61
friendly	.62	stale	- .61
attracting	.62	terrible	- .59
jolly*	.62	unconvincing	- .59
well-known	.61	unappealing	- .59
bright*	.61	crummy*	- .58
well-developed	.61	absurd	- .58
sparkly	.61	uninspired	- .58
worth-remembering*	.60	weak	- .58
worth looking at*	.60	blah	- .57
cheerful*	.59	unnatural	- .57
light*	.58	uninteresting	- .56
joyous	.58	ugly	- .56
creative*	.57	unpleasant	- .56
smooth	.57	sickening	- .56
tender	.57	non sequential	- .55
merry	.57	negative*	- .53
likeable	.57	weird	- .53

FACTOR II

SCALE	LOADING	SCALE	LOADING
FRIGHT		GAIETY	
frightening	.72	light-hearted*	- .58
tragic	.69	light*	- .57
serious	.64	jolly*	- .57
gloomy	.62		
intense	.61	funny	- .57
tense	.59	humorous	- .56
strong	.54	playful*	- .55
painful	.53	joyful*	- .55
believable	.53	joyous*	- .55
horrifying	.53	merry*	- .54
astonishing	.52	gay*	- .53
depressing	.51	comical*	- .51
tough	.50	happy*	- .51
unhappy	.50		

FACTOR III

SCALE	LOADING	SCALE	LOADING
IMPRESSIVE		UNIMPRESSIVE	
intelligent	.66	not worth remembering	.64
impressive*	.61	icky	- .60
great*	.60	insults my intelligence	.58
memorable*	.59	inferior	- .58
good*	.58	phony	- .52
likeable	.58	lousy	- .51
inventive	.56	inept	- .51
ingenious	.50		
(meaningful for me)*	.49		
(informative)*	.48		

FACTOR I

SCALE	LOADING	SCALE	LOADING
LIKED		DISLIKED	
vibrant	.57	vulgar	-.53
enjoyable*	.57	unclear	-.53
stimulating	.56	strange	-.53
tremendous	.55	too much	-.52
pleasant*	.55	colorless	-.52
good	.55	lousy	-.51
popular	.54	tiring	-.51
sentimental	.54	grotesque	-.50
gay	.54	ambiguous	-.50
commendable	.54	vague	-.50
entertaining*	.54	unbelievable	-.50
professional	.53	dreadful	-.50
romantic*	.53	(low-class)*	-.48
refreshing*	.53	(nauseating)*	-.47
famous	.52	(horrible)*	-.42
believable	.50	(icky)*	-.40
colorful	.50	(hostile)*	-.40
		(horrifying)*	-.40
		(unhappy)*	-.40

FACTOR IV

SCALE	LOADING	SCALE	LOADING
QUALITY OF PRODUCTION		DISJOINTED	
easy to remember	.63	disconnected	.51
entertaining	.58		
colorful	.52		

FACTOR V

SCALE	LOADING
OBTRUSIVE	
rude*	.56
sarcastic*	.52
broken-up	.51

FACTOR VI

SCALE	LOADING
REALISM	
(realistic)*	.41)
(real-life)	.38)

The Liked-Disliked Factor accounted for 21% of the total variance.

The Fright-Gaiety Factor accounted for 10% of the total variance. All the gaiety words also loaded on the Liked Factor, with the exception of humorous, funny, and comical. Gaiety, then, was one aspect of the Liked Factor, while the humorous dimension was separate from the Liked Factor.

The Impressive-Unimpressive Factor accounted for 7% of the variance. 2 words in the Unimpressive factor also loaded on the Disliked Factor (icky, lousy).

The Quality of Production-Disjointed Factor accounted for 5% of the total variance. Two of the three words (entertaining and colorful) also loaded on the Liked Factor.

The Obtrusive Factor accounted for 3% of the total variance.

Fright was the only new factor to emerge from the factor analysis of the second set of previews and Ss. The Fright Factor contained words that were found in the Impressive Factor of Group A (frightening, serious, intense).

The words that resulted from the factor analysis of the first ten previews, when factored analyzed together with the words from the second factor analysis, produced no new factors. The only significant difference was the emergence of a Fright Factor consisting of words from both Group A & Group B.

Scale	Loading
FRIGHT	
horrifying (Gr B)	-.63
horrifying (Gr A)	-.50
gloomy (Gr A)	-.57
gloomy (Gr B)	-.48
negative (Gr A)	-.54
nauseating (Gr A	-.54
hostile (Gr A)	-.54
frightening(Gr B)	-.50
frightening(Gr A)	-.47
irritating (Gr A)	-.50

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Even though subjects in Group A came from a different college and from a different idealogical background than subjects from Group B, and even though different previews were used for each group, both Group A and Group B developed much the same factors and used much the same words in each factor; i.e., ten out of nineteen words in Group A's Liked factor were also found in Group B's Liked factor. The author concludes that there is a strong likehood that certain factors or elements of meaning or subjective responses with regards to film previews are more important than others and will emerge across a wide variety of subjects and across a wide variety of film previews. These are:

LIKEABLENESS. Subjects like certain film previews and dislike others. This factor emerged as the most significant in both Group A and Group B. Also, a very large number of adjectives and adjectival phrases loaded on the Liked-Disliked Factor indicating the many nuances of subjective response people may have for liking or disliking a particular film preview. The Likeability factor finds a parallel in the "Evaluative" factor that has often emerged when concepts are rated on the semantic differential. The Gaiety Factor in Group B seems to be an important dimension of the Liked Factor. Nine of the twelve words in the Gaiety Factor loaded more heavily on the Liked Factor. The author was personally surprised to find that Humor did not emerge as a separate factor (as in the studies of Wells, Leavitt and McConville of TV commercials), but rather was a dimension of an overall Gaiety factor. (The author considered that the previews Butterflies Are Free, Buona Sera Mrs. Campbell, (Group A), Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and What's New Pussycat (Group B) had very distinct humorous elements.)

IMPRESSIVENESS. One characteristic that distinguishes film previews from TV Commercials for example is that film previews are "larger than life." They are presented on the big screen, their content is frequently more "heavy", the performances, character development and scripting are frequently of a different order than for example those of TV Commercials. The author believes the emergence of the Impressive Factor to be one of the most significant findings of this study in that it sets apart and defines a distinguishing characteristic of film previews from other audio-visual media such as TV Commercials. The Impressive Factor finds a somewhat limited parallel in in the "potency" factor that has often emerged when concepts are rated on the semantic differential. Also, it is interesting to note that the Impressive Factor was more fully developed in Group A, subjects from a college strongly influenced by Christian beliefs; whereas nearly all the other factors were more fully developed and contained a wider variety of adjectives with higher loadings on factors in Group B. Perhaps subjects motivated by a more idealistic way of thinking are more apt to respond on the Impressive Factor.

FRIGHT. Another distinguishing characteristic of at least some film previews seems to be the Fright Factor. Even with non-horror films audiences may respond on the Fright Factor through identification with a hero or heroine who is threatened or in connection with a "Disaster" film such as Poseidon Adventure. The Fright Factor did not at first emerge in Group A. However, when in step seven the end product words from Group A were refactored with the end product words from Group B, the Fright Factor emerged with loadings from both Group A and Group B. Three of the Fright Factor words in Group B (frightening, serious, intense) loaded on the Impressive Factor in Group A, indicating that the Fright and Impressive Factors may be somewhat related. If a film preview succeeds in frightening someone, that person may also indicate he or she was impressed by the film.

REALISM. The Realism Factor accounted for only 4 % of the total variance in Group A and did not actually emerge as a significant loading at the .50 level in Group B. The Realism Factor, then, though a distinguishing characteristic of film previews, is less important than the above factors and is useful mainly for discriptive purposes.

QUALITY OF PRODUCTION. The Quality of Production Factor, though pointing up the significance of audiences' response to good production values, seems related to the Liked Factor (in Group B "entertaining" and "colorful", two of the three words loading above .50 on the Quality of Production Factor, also loaded less highly on the Liked Factor).

OBTRUSIVENESS. Even though the Obtrusive Factor accounted for a small percentage of variance, it nevertheless emerged in both Group A and Group B. The Obtrusive Factor particularly in Group A, may relate to previews that go against an audience's established values or ways of looking at life.

The author was personally surprised that no factor emerged measuring "activity" or overall level of energy. Perhaps the compression and fast editing of most film previews make them all seem active and having high levels of energy.

The Factors Likeableness and Impressiveness seem to have a more personal quality than the other factors. They represent judgements in which two members of an audience can conceivably disagree and both be right.

The author attributes the much larger loading of words on Factors in Group B to the fact that Group B watched longer previews (3-4 minutes long) while Group A watched mostly 1 minute long previews. Group B had more time to comprehend the film being previewed and had more information on which to base its judgements.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Can the results of the above study be applied to feature films as well as to the previews of these films? The author believes probably all of the above factors would also apply to feature films. However, adjective rating scales should be developed following procedures similar to the present study for feature films as well. There may be a factor such as "activity" that would emerge using feature films rather than the shorter, compressed film previews.

If we can now assume that the basic dimensions of people's response to film previews are related to the factors of Likeableness, Impressiveness, Fright-Gaiety, and on a lesser level of importance, Realism, Quality of Production, and Obtrusiveness; then the next step would be to take the highest loading words on each factor and construct a set of adjectives that subjects could rate on a one-to-five scale as to how well they fit a particular film preview. One might also take the highest loading adjectives and construct bi-polar scales from the Liked-Disliked Factor for example. Once these scales were developed, they could be used on many different subjects and previews. An average horror film, for example, may achieve a 3.75 rating on the Fright Factor. Any horror preview falling below 3.75 might need to be examined more closely in terms of content, style, excerpts selected, etc.

The author invites colleagues and particularly Graduate students to replicate this study using different film previews and different subjects. In Group A, for example, the factors of Sex and Fantasy emerged, but not at a significantly high level to be useful in this present study, even though in the author's opinion the film previews What's New, Pussycat?, The Naked and the Wicked, Butterflies Are Free, Live and Let Die, and The Way We Were contained very distinct Sex Factor elements, while other previews contained elements of Fantasy. Perhaps under further study these factors will emerge more distinctly.

The author intends to pursue his studies in this area and will make available his data to anyone desiring to pursue studies in this field.

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